

Missouri's Reentry Process

INTRODUCTION

One of the most pressing and complex challenges facing state government in Missouri and across the nation today is the reintegration of adult offenders from prison back into society. **Ninety-seven percent** of all the men and women committed to prison will someday be released from incarceration. During **FY2005 more than 18,000 individuals were released** from Missouri correctional institutions, returning to live in communities across the state. It is in everyone's best interest that released offenders reenter society safely and live as law-abiding, self-sufficient citizens.

During FY05 18,042 individuals were committed to Missouri's prison system. Thirty-two percent of those prison commitments were returning parole violators who failed to transition successfully and were returned to confinement.

Missouri's Reentry Process (formerly Transition from Prison to Community Initiative [TPCI]) is a **collaborative effort** among stakeholder agencies. Our **MRP goals** include:

- ◆ smarter transition practices
- ◆ increase public safety;
- ◆ strengthen families;
- ◆ stabilize neighborhoods;
- ◆ reduce new victimization;
- ◆ released offenders to become contributing citizens; and
- ◆ maximize resources.

Missouri is using an innovative transition model developed by the **National Institute of Corrections** as a philosophical framework for improving offender transition processes.

Corrections, law enforcement and human service agencies are all stakeholders in the transition process. Stakeholder interests are best served when they articulate and promote common interests, integrate and coordinate policies, and develop mutual ownership of improved transition processes.

PLANNING HISTORY

The DOC, the Judiciary, Human Services organizations, law enforcement and victims, together with all Missouri communities and citizens are vested stakeholders in offender transition. On August 21, 2002 an informational meeting to examine Missouri's offender transition practices was convened by former Director Gary B. Kempker, with Directors from:

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| ◆ Department of Mental Health | ◆ Office of State Courts Administrator |
| ◆ Department of Social Services | ◆ Governor's Office |
| ◆ Department of Health & Senior Services | ◆ Department of Economic Development |

At that time a consensus was achieved among the department directors to enter into an inter-departmental collaboration designed to improve transition practices. With assistance provided through NIC, an inter-departmental workshop was conducted on September 10, 2002. Several Theme issues emerged from the workshop that was considered critical to successful transition practices. They included:

- ◆ Sharing information between stakeholder agencies
- ◆ Continuity of Care
- ◆ Coordinated case management
- ◆ Common assessment tools
- ◆ Common outcome measures
- ◆ Establish an inter-departmental planning process

Subsequently a MRP Steering Team was established to manage MRP planning efforts for the collaborating organizations and to develop strategies to improve transition practices.

The Steering Team began working on September 17, 2002. A process roadmap was established to guide the team's planning efforts. The team's initial efforts focused on establishing a solid foundation of information and knowledge from which to build new ideas from. A tremendous amount of baseline data was developed to determine what factors contribute to or undermine successful transition. Focus groups were conducted with successful offender groups, returned parole violator groups and Probation and Parole Officers. A review of the "what works" literature and research was also conducted. Based upon analysis of extensive quantitative and qualitative baseline data and information, those factors that are highly correlated with successful transition or recidivism in Missouri were identified. These factors included mental health, substance abuse, transportation, housing, families and pro-social support, education, information sharing and employment. The identified "risk" and "protective" factors emerged as prime target areas for improving transition practices.

On April 16, 2003 former Director Gary Kempker convened a meeting with collaborating department directors to share the analysis and planning work completed by the steering team and to move forward with the establishment of ad-hoc teams that would develop specific recommendations to improve transition practices. The ad-hoc teams were designed to target the prime risk and protective factors.

With support from the collaborating departments, eight ad-hoc teams were chartered and met during May-June, 2003. The ad-hoc teams were comprised of subject matter experts from within and outside the stakeholder organizations. The ad-hoc teams developed 84 recommendations. Subsequently, the steering team carefully assessed each of the recommendations based upon impact and feasibility, ultimately narrowing the 84 recommendations down to 43 recommendations.

In September and October 2003, the recommended strategies were presented to the Parole Board, DOC Executive Staff and participating department directors. With limited modification, 35 strategies were approved for implementation. The strategies are divided into two parts – system attributes and offender attributes. Each of the strategies is designed to have positive impact on a specific element of transition. Collectively, the recommendations represent a substantial shift in organizational priorities, culture and practice. This purpose driven shift is designed to integrate and maximize resources, reduce recidivism and contribute to safer Missouri families and communities. The projected impact of the approved strategies is a 10% reduction in recidivism. During October 2003, the Steering Team identified implementation managers, developed "deliverables" and implementation "due dates." During December 2003 the Steering Team reviewed the implementation plan for each

strategy in detail. The implementation plans for 34 strategies are moving forward with implementation. The implementation plan for strategy 2.5.01 “develop an infrastructure to share offender information electronically” has been deferred.

Upon arrival of the new Department Director Larry Crawford in late 2004, the MRP Steering Team shared the philosophy and the work that had been done relative to reentry in Missouri. Director Crawford fully supports this concept today; therefore, the MRP Steering Team has continued to move forward. Additions to the Steering Team would include Department of Revenue and Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Community organizations were expanded to include victims, faith based, law enforcement and ex-offenders. The newly appointed Directors of our partnering agencies have been educated on this collaboration and have expressed support to continue the partnerships.

In September, 2005 Governor Matt Blunt signed Executive Order 05-33 ordering and directing the Department of Corrections to lead a permanent interagency steering team for the Missouri Reentry Process. The mission of this team is to integrate successful offender reentry principles and practices in state agencies and communities resulting in partnerships that enhance offender self-sufficiency, reduce re-incarceration, and improve public safety.